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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
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NOAA 02-R  
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### **Fallon County Area Gets New Weather Warning System**

With severe weather always threatening, residents of Fallon County, Mont. can now stay on top of storm activity through an expansion of special radio broadcast programming originating from the NOAA National Weather Service in Billings.

NOAA Weather Radio, "The Voice of the National Weather Service," is a live 24-hour source of weather forecasts and warnings. Starting May 10 the radio broadcasts will be available to area residents from a new transmitter in Baker, Mont., according to Keith Meier, meteorologist-in-charge. Meier said residents in and around Fallon County including those in northern Carter, southern Wibaux, eastern Custer, western Slope, western Bowman, and northeastern Harding counties can tune in to the weather radio broadcasting at 162.550 MHz.

In April 2001, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utility Service (RUS) launched its Weather Radio Transmitter Grant Program. The \$5 million program provides grant funds for the purchase and installation of NOAA Weather Radio transmitters and associated equipment in rural areas not currently covered by the weather broadcasts. RUS expects its grant program to add about 90 more transmitter sites to this nationwide radio network.

"This is a great success story for the community and for rural Montana. Using funds made available through the RUS's program, Fallon County was able to purchase and then subsequently donate a \$30,000 transmitter to the National Weather Service," Meier said.

Other contributors providing materials or supplies for this project included a donation of 1700 feet of phone cable, valued at \$5,970 from Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative in Circle, Mont. Additionally, Southeast Electric Cooperative in Ekalaka, Mont. provided ten years of free power to the transmitter site at an estimated cost of \$4,500. Fallon County also provided space on its Bechtold Hill transmitter tower to host the equipment for fifteen years at a cost of about \$18,000.

"We are very excited about this collective effort and what this means to the community and  
(More)

## NOAA Weather Radio -2-

the residents who are now able to receive these important weather broadcasts,” said Meier. “The grant funds from RUS provided the seed money to bring all of these partners together. This is an excellent example of public and private organizations working together and the cooperative attitude of everyone involved has been exemplary,” Meier said.

Stephan Kuhl, warning coordination meteorologist at the Billings weather office also said the Baker weather radio signal significantly increases the National Weather Service’s ability to reach the residents directly with vital inclement weather warnings. NOAA Weather Radio allows meteorologists to send weather statements and warnings straight from the forecaster to the public, thus saving five to 10 minutes or more of valuable time.

“When you don’t have a radio or TV turned on, having a seven band NOAA Weather Radio with an automatic alarm in your home or barn helps you protect your family, yourself, and your property,” Kuhl said. “Thunderstorms over central and eastern Montana caused more than \$3 million in damage last year. Winter storms have also had a significant economic loss on the region.”

Vickie Nadolski, director of the National Weather Service’s Western Region in Salt Lake City said, “The combination of improved severe weather detection and forecasting capabilities, as well as the expansion of our Weather Radio network nationwide is a proven formula for saving lives, especially for people who live and work in rural locations. We appreciate the initiative of all of the partners for the Baker NOAA Weather Radio site. Through all of these unique partnerships we are enhancing the National Weather Service’s ability to protect the lives and property of the citizens in their area.”

The NOAA Weather Radio network has over 650 stations, covering all 50 states, adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. Pacific Territories. Weather radios come in many sizes, with a variety of functions and costs. Some receivers automatically sound an alarm and turn themselves on if a severe weather warning is broadcast and can be programmed to warn for weather and civil emergencies in only your county. Most NOAA Weather Radio receivers are either battery-operated portables or AC-powered desktop models with battery backup. Some scanners, HAM radios, CB radios, short wave receivers, and AM/FM radios are capable of receiving NOAA Weather Radio transmissions. Weather radios can be purchased at many electronics stores.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. The National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy.

For more information, consult the NOAA Weather Radio home page at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.html> or the RUS Weather Radio Transmitter Grant Program at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/initiatives/noaa/weatherradio.htm>.

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